



By: Tom Taylor 10th January 2022 MUSIC

## Cathy Jain on dream-pop, youth and the authentic self

At a time when their formative moments are being stifled by the pandemic, Cathy Jain speaks to an introspective generation's desire for authentic experiences. *Sometimes we just wanna be some melodramatic teens*, she reassures fans on green screen, a track from her debut EP *artificial*. The release explores the curiosity and naivety of youth and has earned Jain a place on [NME's list of essential emerging artists for 2022](#).

Her sound has been described as dream-pop or alt-pop, the sort of music you listen to while staring wistfully out of the window on a long car journey. "I would accept any of those things because I'm willing to explore those different genres," she says. "All genres, all labels. I'm cool with everything." Jain is at her family home in Nantwich, a small market town in Cheshire, and we're talking over video chat.



Photo: Mae Sass

"I started working on the EP just before lockdown," Jain says, describing how she would send tracks back and forth with her producer, Rob Heron, who lives in India. "We were doing remote work before the lockdowns hit, so we were ahead of the trend with that," she laughs. Her lyrics reflect the pandemic, without being cliché or obtuse.

Jain explains that green screen is about someone chasing a feeling that they've only read about in books or seen in films, but never being able to experience it themselves. "I think that's very relatable for many people who have been stuck inside," she says.

Another track on the EP, *cool kid*, explores fakeness in relationships and friendships: "I think when people try to fit in and make friends, in a way they have to diminish real parts of themselves and accentuate other parts which are also completely real and completely acceptable."

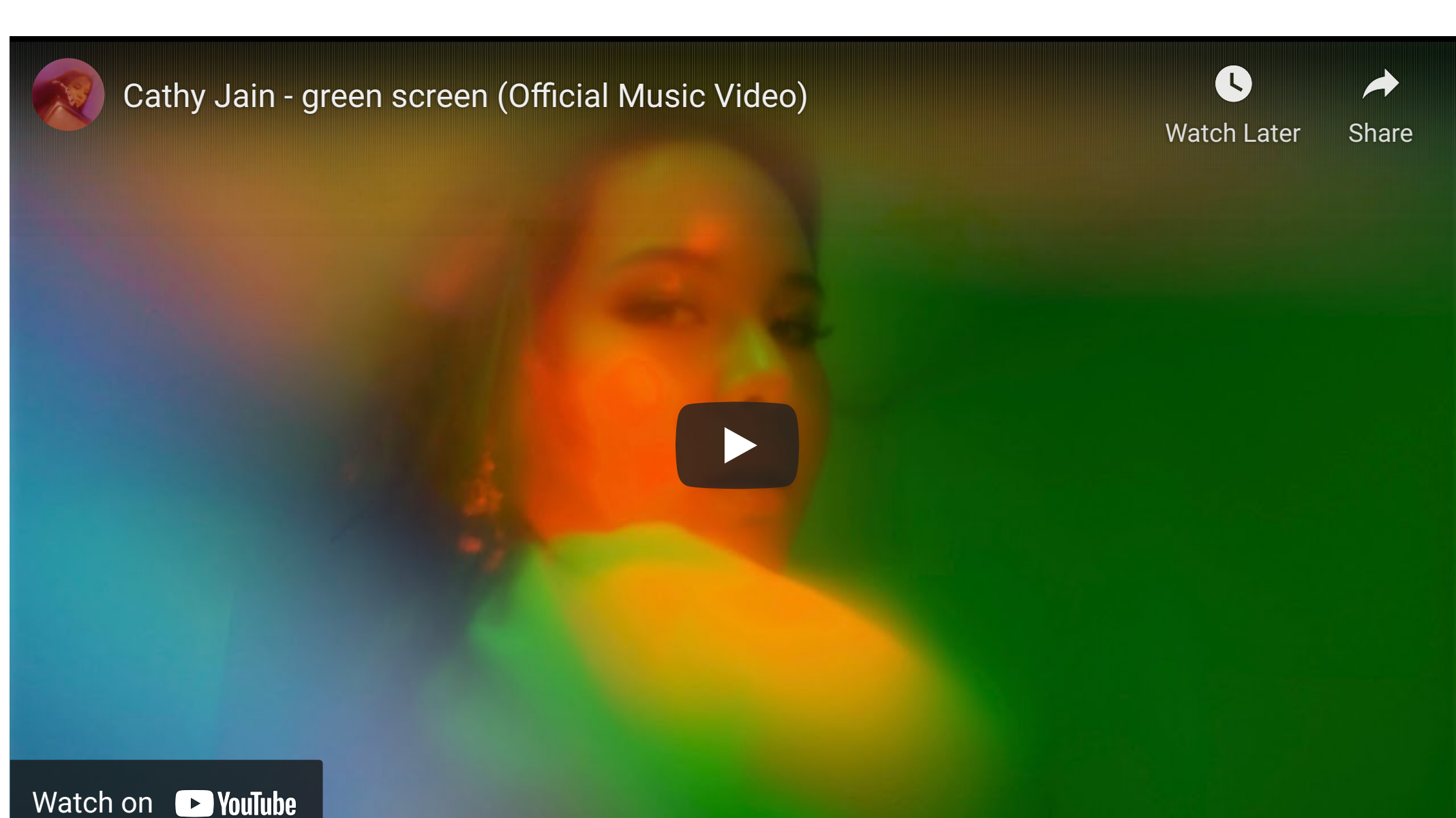
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This concept of the authentic self and ideas around how people adapt their personalities to suit different social situations is influenced by Jain's experience moving to Nantwich from China. "There was an overwhelming feeling that I wanted to fit in and I wanted to be like everyone else so that I wouldn't be rejected," she says. We talk about how changing the way you act or present yourself doesn't necessarily make you a fake person and that it is natural and normal to adapt.

Jain was born in Manchester, but moved to China at a young age. She's also lived in Australia and India and believes moving around a lot as a child has influenced her music. In China, she learnt to play the Guzheng, a traditional harp, which can be heard on [i see us in heaven](#) and is visible in the [music video for green screen](#). "It's a beautiful instrument that I include in many of my songs," she says. "You don't really hear traditional Chinese instruments in modern pop music or singer-songwriter style songs currently, so I'd love to spread awareness of that."



In China and Australia, she started listening to Katy Perry, Selena Gomez and, most importantly for Jain, Taylor Swift. "I think watching Taylor Swift specifically has been very educational and informative for me, as an artist and as a fan," Jain says. We talk about Swift's journey reclaiming her [master recordings from music mogul Scooter Braun](#) and if, as a young artist, this has made Jain more wary of how she handles the rights to her music.

"I think a lot of artists now are trying to see her as an example and learn from it," Jain says. "The team that I'm building now, although it's quite small, I trust everyone on the team. My parents would look into everything, they would read all the paperwork if they had to."

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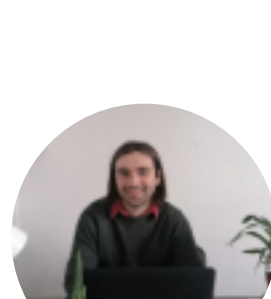
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Given her success so far and the emotional depth of her lyrics, it's easy to forget that Jain is only 17 and very much at the start of her career. Last year, she performed as Cathy Jain for the first time at [Latitude Festival](#) after finding success uploading tracks to BBC Introducing. She was also shortlisted for Radio One's Live Lounge Competition, receiving positive feedback from the likes of Yungblud and Wolf Alice and subsequently signed to Yala! Records.

"I was used to just doing solo sets, just me and the guitar, for many years when I was younger, but I had never played with an actual band," Jain says. "I think that's something I really want to continue to work on, trying to find the best live set for me."

This year is set to be even more exciting for Jain as she plans to dive more into producing her own songs and perform her music live. "We've already started planning for the next big release and all the songs are done", Jain says. "These next few songs are clearly a next level up. There's a lot more energy to them and a lot more life because they're more recent as well. I think people will really feel that."

*artificial* by Cathy Jain is released on Yala! Records. Consider buying the EP from [one of Greater Manchester's independent record shops](#) or from the artist's [Bandcamp](#).



Tom Taylor

Tom Taylor is a journalist and photographer from Greater Manchester and founder of Salt Magazine.

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